Southwest®

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Lakshmi Sridaran
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Robert McCaw
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Dear Ms. Sridaran and Mr. McCaw:

On behalf of Southwest Airlines, this letter is a response to the October 19, 2017 statement from CAIR and SAALT and other organizations. We appreciate the opportunity to address the points raised in your statement and to assure you of our commitment to non-discrimination and providing each one of our Customers with genuine hospitality while maintaining the highest degree of safety.

The primary issue in the CAIR/SAALT statement appears to be recent allegations by Dr. Anila Daulatzai. Before addressing that specific issue, I want to focus more broadly on Southwest's commitment to providing each of our Customers with safe travel as well as outstanding Customer Service. Southwest takes seriously its responsibility to safely transport our Customers and strives to provide each and every one of them with the highest possible degree of respect and hospitality. In large part due to our focus on Customer Service, Southwest has grown to become the largest airline operating in the U.S. with over 151 million passenger enplanements in 2016. Data from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) shows Southwest received the lowest ratio of complaints per passenger of any U.S. airline in 2016 and continues to have the lowest ratio of complaints to passengers of any U.S. airline since DOT began keeping such statistics in 1987. With respect to complaints filed with DOT *alleging* racial, religious or ethnic discrimination, Southwest received a total of six (6) complaints in 2016, representing one of the lowest ratios – if not the lowest ratio – within the airline industry.

As Southwest continues to provide genuine hospitality to our Customers, aviation safety is always our highest priority. With that, our Employees are trained to make decisions to protect the safety and security of our flight crew and passengers on each of our 4,000 daily flights. Like many other airlines, Southwest's training takes many factors into account – with the primary focus on aviation safety – to ensure the protection of our Customers and Flight Crew. Our manuals and training materials are also designed to ensure full compliance with the federal laws or regulations that make safety "the highest priority in air commerce," 49 U.S.C § 40101(a)(1), give us the responsibility to investigate or respond to potential aviation safety issues, 49 US.C. § 44902, and prohibit discrimination in air transportation. 49 U.S.C § 40127(a). By way of

example, our Flight Attendant Manual states clearly that Southwest will provide service to all passengers in a non-discriminatory manner, and that policy is highlighted during training. Together with our strong track record, the policies and training make clear that Southwest does not condone or tolerate discrimination or prejudice of any kind, whether toward Employees, Customers, or vendors.

With this background in mind, we want to address the incidents cited in your statement. The CAIR/SAALT statement refers to Khairuldeen Makhzoomi's removal from a Southwest flight in April 2016, but CAIR (which filed a complaint with the DOT) is obviously aware that the DOT conducted a "thorough review" of the facts and determined that: (1) "it does not appear that Southwest violated the law by removing Mr. Makhzoomi from the aircraft to further investigate the alleged security concern;" and (2) "there is insufficient evidence to support a finding that the carrier subjected Mr. Makhzoomi to discrimination on the basis of his national origin." Once again, in our experience, the media stories cited in your statement differ greatly from the facts and circumstances reviewed by the DOT and reported by the Flight Crew.

The body of your statement also focuses on the recent allegations by Dr. Daulatzai. It is important to stress, again, that the accusations by Dr. Daulatzai differ greatly from the reports from our Employees and Passengers. First and foremost, Dr. Daulatzai's removal from Southwest Flight 1525 on September 26 had nothing whatsoever to do with race, color, religion, or ancestry. Rather, in the process of boarding, Dr. Daulatzai made repeated comments to our Crew and other Passengers about her life-threatening allergy after seeing dogs onboard (one emotional support animal and one pet). When the Flight Crew learned of her life-threatening allergy, Southwest gave her options to ensure her safety. For example, the Captain informed Dr. Daulatzai that she could consult with medical personnel (through StatMD on a jetbridge phone) about her allergy. Dr. Daultazai refused this offer, however. After Dr. Daulatzai refused any of the options presented to her, the Captain made the decision that she could not safely travel on the 5-plus-hour flight and should be rebooked. With that, once the Captain and Flight Attendants notified Dr. Daulatzai that she could not travel on the flight and would be rebooked, it was incumbent on Dr. Daulatzai to exit the airplane. However, Dr. Daulatzai refused to follow the Crewmembers' instructions to exit the airplane.

For the other instances referenced in the statement, the Captains on both flights denied boarding after the Customers refused to follow crewmember instructions. In both cases, the Passengers were attempting to re-arrange the seats of other seated Passengers and continually ignored the instructions of the Flight Crew prior to departure.

Southwest is committed to full compliance with all federal laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or ancestry. At the same time, as an airline that enplanes roughly 151 million passengers (and growing) every year, Southwest must adhere to our obligation to ensure the safety of the operation. We assure you that our procedures and training materials for the non-discriminatory treatment of passengers are "living documents" that are under continuous review for possible improvement. If we see a way that we can run a more compliant airline or otherwise enhance the travel experience for all of our

Customers while maintaining safety, we will devote the time and resources necessary to revise our procedures and training protocols as appropriate.

A cursory view of Southwest's workforce, as well as our expansive, multi-cultural Customer base, is a reliable indicator that we exalt and appreciate diversity. It has been Southwest Airlines' pleasure to support many diverse organizations for over a decade and we have invested time, talent, and treasure into our relationships with each and every one. We will continue to nurture relationships that positively impact all communities, including the Muslim, Pacific Islander, and Asian American community. While Southwest is sympathetic to your organizations' concerns for profiling of communities of color, that is not what happened in any of the incidents cited in your statement related to Southwest.

Sincerely,

Juan Suarez
Deputy General Counsel